

## **Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)**

### ***A 2002 Farm Bill Program to Assist Family Forest Landowners***

Q: What is FLEP?

A: The Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) is a federally-funded program created by the 2002 Farm Bill to provide financial, technical, and educational assistance to family forest landowners to help them better manage their forested lands. FLEP replaces the former Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) and Forestry Incentives Program (FIP).

Q: Who qualifies to participate in FLEP?

A: Non-industrial private forest landowners, including tribes. Public entities and industrial forest landowners are ineligible. Each state will establish minimum and maximum eligibility criteria within prescribed federal guidelines.

Q: Who administers FLEP?

A: FLEP is federally funded and administered nationally by the USDA Forest Service. The program is administered in each state by the State Forestry Agency (e.g. Washington State Department of Natural Resources).

Q: How is FLEP similar/different from previous USDA forestry cost-share programs?

A: FLEP will offer similar practices to SIP and FIP, plus several more. However, unlike previous “on-size-fits-all” programs, each state will have more flexibility to develop and implement the program to meet state and local needs.

Q: What types of practices does FLEP fund?

A: There are 11 categories of practices which states can choose to offer:

FLEP-1: Forest Stewardship Plan preparation by private consultant

FLEP-2: Afforestation and Reforestation

FLEP-3: Forest Stand Improvement

FLEP-4: Agro-Forestry

FLEP-5: Water Quality and Watershed Improvement

FLEP-6: Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improvement

FLEP-7: Forest Health

FLEP-8: Invasive Species Control

FLEP-9: Wildfire and Catastrophic Event Risk Reduction

FLEP-10: Wildfire and Catastrophic Event Rehabilitation

FLEP-11: Special Practices

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Q: How well is the FLEP Program funded?

A: FLEP will be funded nationally at a total \$100 million spread over a five year period, therefore, annual funding will average \$20 million nationwide. Distribution to states has not yet been determined, however, based on previous funding under other programs, we “guestimate” that Washington might get \$300,000 – \$500,000 (???).

Q: How much financial assistance can I get from FLEP?

A: Each state will establish cost-share rates for practices in their state in consultation with the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee. Federal statute caps the cost-share payment to any landowner at no more than 75% per application, not to exceed \$100,000 over the five-year life of the program. States can set lower limits. Washington will establish these limits in their FLEP Priority Plan which will be available for review in October 2002.

Q: When, where, and how do I apply?

A: FLEP will become operational 30 days after the publishing of the FLEP Interim Rule in the Federal Register. If everything stays on schedule, we should be able to begin accepting FLEP applications in early 2003. Interested persons will be able to apply for FLEP by contacting the DNR Region Office which serves the area where their land is located.

Q: How can I comment on FLEP as it is developed?

A: Public comment is welcome and invited at two stages:

1) Federal Level — Draft FLEP Interim Rule:

The Interim Rule is a federal document which “fleshes out” the law which created FLEP. It establishes the “sideboards” within which the states will develop and administer their own programs. The USDA Forest Service should make the Draft Interim Rule available for public review in mid-September 2002.

2) State Level ---- Draft State FLEP Priority Plan:

Each state must develop a State FLEP Priority Plan which establishes the requirements, priorities, practices, cost-share rates, procedures, and policies for operation of the FLEP program in that state. In effect, the State FLEP Priority Plan becomes the “program handbook” for the operation of FLEP in each state. The plan is developed with input from the state Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee which represents a wide variety of federal, state, and local agencies, landowners, tribes, and organizations. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will have a Draft State FLEP Priority Plan ready for review by mid-October 2002.

To receive a copy of either of these draft documents, contact:

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Q: How can I be notified when FLEP is “ready to go”?

R: Send your e-mail or US Mail address to the person listed above. We’ll send you a notice when we begin accepting applications for FLEP.